

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 03036 130844Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
ACDA-07 IO-13 EUR-12 SSM-03 /091 W
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R 130802Z MAY 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3073
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3036

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR SY LE
SUBJ: SITUATION IN LEBANON: ONE SYRIAN'S VIEW

1. MFA AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR SHOEFI DURING CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF AND VISITING EMBASSYBEIRUT POLOFF MOLINEAUX REVIEWED SYRIAN ATTEMPT TO CONSOLIDATE PEACE IN LEBANON. AFTER DESCRIBING APRIL CLASH BETWEEN SYRIAN ADF FORCES AND PLO REJECTIONISTS, HE OPINED THAT A) AL-ASSAD REGIME WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY CONSTRUCTING DURABLE COALITION OF SUPPORTERS IN LEBANON BECAUSE REGIME COULD NOT EXPECT TO TRANSPOSE ITS ALWITE-DOMINATED MILITARY SECURITY SYSTEM TO LEBANON AND B) INCLINATION OF MANY LEBANESE FACTIONS TO LOOK TO US FOR LEADERSHIP IN RESOLVING CRISIS SUGGESTED MORE ACTIVE US MEDIATORY ROLE POSSIBLE AND WOULD HAVE SOME CHANCE FOR SUCCESS.

2. APRIL CLASHES. BASING HIS INFORMATION ON DISCUSSION WITH SYRIAN OFFICER STATIONED IN BEIRUT, SHOEFI SAID APRIL CLASHES BETWEEN SYRIAN ADF FORCES AND PLO/LEBANESE
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 03036 130844Z

EXTREMISTS BEGAN WHEN TWO ADF VEHICLES STOPPED FOUR INDIVIDUALS CARRYING FAKE SAIQA IDENTITY CARDS WHO BELONGED TO ABU AL-ABBAS PFLP-GC FACTION. FOUR WERE DIVIDED INTO TWO CARS FOR TRANSPORTATION TO DETENTION CENTER TO INVESTIGATE THEIR BACKGROUND, BUT ON WAY TWO OF THEM OVERPOWERED AND KILLED SOLDIERS IN ONE CAR AND OTHER TWO ALSO ESCAPED. THIS ESCALATED QUICKLY TO CLASHES BETWEEN ADF REINFORCEMENTS

AND ELEMENTS BELONGING TO BREAKAWAY PFLP-GC FACTION. SYRIAN ADF TROOPS WERE UNABLE TO CAPTURE THE FOUR AND FINALLY HALTED FIGHTING WHEN FATAH APPREHENDED THEM AND TURNED THEM OVER TO SYRIAN FORCES. ACCORDING TO SHOEFI, FOUR DETAINEES WERE QUICKLY TRIED AND EXECUTED. (NOTE: WP REPORTER AUERBACH TOLD US THAT HE LEARNED 18 SYRIAN SOLDIERS WERE KILLED IN FIGHTING THAT FOLLOWED ORIGINAL INCIDENT.)

3. SYRIAN COALITION IN LEBANON AND US ROLE. SHOEFI SAID REGIME WAS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY PUTTING TOGETHER DURABLE COALITION OF SUPPORTERS IN LEBANON BECAUSE MOST LEBANESE FACTIONS WERE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT ALLYING THEMSELVES TOO CLOSELY WITH SARG WHICH THEY SAW AS AN ALAWITE-DOMINATED MILITARY/SECURITY REGIME. IN CONTRAST SHOEFI SAID, MANY KEY LEBANESE FACTIONS ON BOTH CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM SIDE WOULD WELCOME MORE ACTIVE US MEDIATORY ROLE TO RESTORE MORE PERMANENT STRUCTURE TO LEBANESE SOCIETY. MANY LEBANESE REMAINED SUPPORTERS OF US DESPITE WHAT HE VIEWED AS US DIPLOMATIC INACTION WHICH PERMITTED CIVIL WAR TO DRAG ON. MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, POLITICAL SITUATION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DAMASC03036
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770170-0322
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770563/aaaacbts.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
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Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2541090
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SITUATION IN LEBANON: ONE SYRIAN'S VIEW
TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/877d3895-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009